

HABS
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Tampa City Hall
315 East Kennedy Boulevard
Tampa
Hillsborough County
Florida

HABS No. FL-338

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20240

HABS No. FL-338

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FLA,

29 - Tampa

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NAME:

TAMPA CITY HALL

LOCATION:

315 East Kennedy Boulevard
Tampa, Florida 33602
Hillsborough County, Florida

PRESENT OWNER:

City of Tampa

PRESENT OCCUPANT:

City Departments:
Utilities Accounting, Traffic Engineering,
Purchasing, Revenue and Finance, City
Council Offices, City Clerk, City
Attorneys, Legal Library.

PRESENT USE:

Office, Council Chambers and Computer
Space.

SIGNIFICANCE:

Tampa City Hall is a classical "layer cake" building on the National Register of Historic Places, completed in 1915 and stands today with major building components substantially in tact. This building is one of the best known works of the architect, M. Leo Elliott and is one of the richest in detail of old buildings in the heart of Downtown Tampa. A four-faced clock named "Hortense the Beautiful" enjoys local landmark reputation and occupies the building's Bell Tower.

PART I - HISTORIC INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: The corner stone was laid in January 1915 with masonic ceremonies with Mrs. Maria Moore Post, widow of Madison Post (third Mayor of Tampa) as the principal speaker. The \$235,000.00 building was occupied in late 1915. This new facility with a matching three-story Police Station and Jailhouse completed in 1916, replaced the original two-story brick City Hall on the site which served as Police, Fire and City Office Headquarters. The original \$10,000.00 building was designed by C. E. Parcell, Architect, and completed in August, 1890 by James Bullivant and J. C. McNeil Contractors.

The City determined that they were too poor to afford clockworks for the Clock Tower, so a private group formed called the "Town Criers". Led by Hortense Oppenheimer Ford they were successful in raising money privately. The Tampa Times Newspaper christened the new clock "Hortense the Beautiful" after the leader of the "Town Criers" and the name has remained to this day.

The City Commissioners of Board of Public Works in Tampa in 1915 included D. B. McKay, Chairman, H. E. Snow, T. H. Henderson and Wilfred C. Clarkson.

2. Architect: M. Leo Elliott

Mr. Elliott, was born April 4, 1886, Woodstock, Ulster County, New York, son of Malachi and Margaret (Tracy) Elliott.

Atelier Upon completion of his public school education, he attended Cooper Institute, and later continued the study of Architecture at Don Barber Athlier, New York City.

Mr. Elliott located in Tampa April 4, 1907 at the age of 21, and started the practice of Architecture under the firm name of M. Leo Elliott, the firm designing and supervising the erection of the Centro Astriano Club, the "Atlantus" in Brunswick, Georgia, the City Hall and many other important structures.

This Partnership was dissolved at the outbreak of the World War, at which time Mr. Elliott devoted his entire time to the construction of reinforced concrete ships for the Government.

PART I - HISTORIC INFORMATION

A. Physical History - Continued

Again in 1920 he resumed the practice of Architecture under the firm name of M. Leo Elliott, Inc., with 46 draftsmen, 6 engineers and 47 inspectors, with offices in Tampa and St. Petersburg, during which time he has build up one of the largest architectural practices in the South, specificalizing in the designing of educational and commercial buildings.

Mr. Elliott has to his credit many of the finest bank buildings, hotel and apartment buildings in Florida, his work being readily recognized by the masterful manner in which the design of each building is carried out.

Few, if any, architects have attained the height in the architectural profession, in so short a time, as has Mr. Elliott, and in addition to the practice of his profession, he deals extensively in real estate and has large holdings in business property in the City of Tampa.

He is a member of the Rotary Club, Tampa Board of Trade, and the Palma Ceia Golf Club, and is a Mason and Shriner.

Mr. Elliott was married in Tampa on the 26th day of October, 1910, to Miss Beth Thompson, and they have two children: Sheila and M. Leo, Junior.

History of Hillsborough County, Florida by Ernest L. Robinson, 1928, The Record Company Printers, St. Augustine, Florida, P. 237.

3. Builder, Contractor: McGucken and Hyer, Contractors, Tampa, Florida.
4. Original Plans and Construction: Structural drawings for Tampa City Hall were provided by H. G. Perring Engineering Company, Consulting Engineers of Jacksonville, Florida and were completed on March 12, 1914, and involved 10 27" x 40" sheets. This set of drawings still exists on prints and microfilm, although original tracings no longer exist.

Drawings by Bonfoey and Elliott Architects of Tampa, exist only on microfilm and consisted of at least 14 sheets and were completed in March 1914. Additional interior partition sheets were later drawn indicating lighting, fans and office locations.

A 1915 construction photograph provided by B. C. Bonfoey appeared in the June 28, 1972 Tampa Tribune Newspaper. The Tribune billed City Hall on the downtown horizon as "Tampa's City Hall Layer Cake."

PART I - HISTORIC INFORMATION

A. Physical History - Continued

5. Alterations and Additions:

- (1) In July of 1962 the adjoining three-story Police Station Jailhouse and Stable were voted by City Council to be demolished. The following article by Karl Dobert appeared in the July 8, 1962 Edition of The Tampa Tribune:

Tampa's City Hall and its four-story Annex cost taxpayers \$235,000 about 48 years ago.

A week ago the Mayor and City Council vetoed the idea of spending almost that much to renovate only the Annex.

The decision marked the end of the Annex and the beginning of the end for the ten-story City Hall.

Demolition of the Annex, for 46 years the home of the Tampa Police Force, now is a certainty, and the pangs of progress presage a future similar fate for the City Hall.

In 1916 the Annex Building was a marvel of up-to-date architecture and served as a gleaming monument to the Tampa skyline.

The interior was the pride of the Tampa Police. Sleeping rooms, a lounge and the fleet of two automobiles were provided for, so were 11 horses sheltered there and the stable doors can be seen to this day even though they are closed up with a brick facing.

A description of the then commoditive shelter for Tampa's Men of Blue written in The Tribune in 1914, while it was under construction also pointed out this feature:

"The Police Division will contain a City Jail consisting of 44 cells, two of which will be padded."

The complete new structure was pictured like this:

"The Building is to be of classic design, on a framework of reinforced concrete, the exterior walls will be constructed of granite, brick and terra cotta. The building will cost the City approximately \$235,000.00."

A caption over a drawing of the building (it looked then as it looks now except for the inevitable aging) proclaimed it to be: "Tampa's Magnificent City Building."

PART I - HISTORIC INFORMATION

A. Physical History - Continued

5. Alterations and Additions:

(1) Continued

Final drawing of the home of Tampa's City Government was selected from a dozen or more designs submitted by Architects.

Bonfoey and Elliott were successful architects and it was constructed by McGucken and Hyer, Contractors. (A library built in the same year cost \$50,000.00 and it was donated to the City by the Andrew Carnegie Foundation. The City is also planning a new building to replace that library.)

The Police Station served adequately for a few years and faithfully for many.

But as each year went by the spacious rooms chopped up into smaller ones until in 1956 City Officials began talking up plans for a new station.

The Police moved its bags and baggage (and prisoners) into their modern building on Tampa Street a year ago.

Creakiness of the Old Annex became evident in the late 40's and all through the 50's. In 1957 a shower of plaster cascaded from the first floor ceiling but no one was hurt. A year after that City Officials feared the building would fall down and ordered the floors strengthened to hold bulging filing cabinets.

A year ago it became a lonely abandoned hulk of a building as the Administration first decided to convert the building into office space to relieve similar crowded conditions in the adjoining City Hall.

With continued reports that the building might still fall down, the Administration wavered in its determination to use the building.

Decision day arrived a week ago and the deed was done.

The walls will soon come tumbling down.

- (2) Various other additions and alterations have taken place at City Hall as outlined in Part III, Architectural Drawings.

PART II - ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior:

The Architecture of the facility is of a layer cake profile 158 feet high, excludes a 27' high flagpole, and of palladian influence. The first three floors are composed of five structural bays in a 93' square plan and reveal 5 limestone columns at the second and third floors but only on the two primary elevations north and east. The south and west elevations utilize brick pilasters in lieu of limestone columns. The first floor is composed of rusticated granite facing at the north and east elevations. The remaining exterior materials at the first three floors include; double hung wood and steel windows with clear glazing, buff brick facing and brick detail work and extensive terra cotta ornamentation at the third floor fascia, railing and pediment. A 1915 cornerstone is engraved at the northeast corner of the first floor as well as a bronze building plaque at the north facade. A seal of the City is cast in stone over the main entry doors at the north facade. A benchmark indicates that the building is 19.511 feet above sea level.

The fourth floor is a 49' square plan with three structural bays. The fourth floor is unique in that full arched windows are utilized at all elevations. The roof area is readily accessible. A terra cotta ornamental band separates the fourth and fifth floor and provides a key stone at the brick arches of the fourth floor windows. Buff colored brick is the primary facing material at the fourth floor.

Floors five through seven are identical in all four elevations. Rectangular double-hung wood windows in groups of three in three bays make-up the glass areas. The remainder is brick in-fill.

Floor eight is identical in all four elevations and acts as a cap for floors four through eight. A three window segmental arched opening fills three bays. Four ornamental terra cotta heads terminate the four story brick piers. The ornamental heads were fashioned from a seminole indian maiden with braided hair. The eighth floor incorporates extensive terra cotta ornamentation at the fascia, railing and pediment.

The ninth floor is a 30 foot square and has one full arched window at each elevation with translucent glazing. The exterior material is stuccoed gypsum block layed in a running bond. An ornamental terra cotta cap supports a stucco pediment with terra cotta urns and flames at each of four corners.

The tenth floor is a 16 foot square housing clockworks with a luminous dial and a bell with metal louvers. Stucco gypsumed block provides an exterior skin. Ornamental stucco and metal make-up the fascia and pediment.

PART II - ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. Description of Exterior: (Continued)

An ornamental copper dome constructed from a square base crowns the building. A 27 foot high flagpole with brass ball tops the dome.

The structural system of the building is poured in place concrete post and beam on concrete bell footings. Floor slabs are hollow structural clay tiles with concrete infill. Masonry and stone are used as facing materials.

The first three floors of the building originally had a twin building immediately to the south which was the Police Station.

B. Description of Interior:

Tampa City Hall was designed to accomodate 35,000 square feet of City office functions, with the basic plan revealing a central core that includes a single monumental central stair, an elevator, and toilet rooms. The perimeter of each floor is reserved for office space. The building was designed with no central heating or cooling system but rather, utilized passive energy techniques such as operable windows, ceiling fans at each bay, operable transoms, high ceilings, and venetian blinds.

The first floor has a main hall which connects the main entry at the north to Kennedy Boulevard and what was an internal connection to the South at the Police Station. A secondary entry occurs to the east at Florida Avenue. The last remaining hand-operated elevator in the City serves the main hall with an open core monumental stair immediately opposite the elevator. The main hall and stairs have marble wainscots and marble treads at the stairs. Walls typically are painted plaster with oak wood base moulds, chair rails, picture rails and plaster cove mouldings at the plaster ceilings. Vinyl tile typically and ceramic tile at baths make up original floor materials. The stairs used mosaic tiles at stair landings.

Beyond the third floor, the exposed stairs become metal treads and stringers, metal newel posts, metal balastrades, oak handrails and are typical at the stairs. Only one stair exists within the building. Doors are oak panel with custom brass hardware wearing the seal of the City on the mounting plates at the handles. The second and third floors of the building have record vaults with metal doors. The ninth floor is used for Otis Elevator Equipment. It was determined that an elevator was not built into the building until 1927, some 12 years after the building's original construction.

PART II - ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

C. Site:

The location of the Tampa City Hall is in the center of the downtown central business district on the southwest corner of the intersection of Kennedy Boulevard (formerly LaFayette Street) and Florida Avenue. The primary facade of the building faces north west and Kennedy Boulevard, while the secondary facade faces northeast and Florida Avenue. A recent 1978 Municipal Office Building was constructed southwest of the original City Hall. A matching three-story Police Station was built south of City Hall originally, but razed in the Sixties to accommodate a Mayor - City Councilman Parking Lot. A new City Hall Plaza was completed in 1979 connecting the two buildings on the site.

PART III - SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

- I. December 1979 - August 1980; a study for the City of Tampa entitled "Analysis of Structural Components and Mechanical Systems and Recommendations for Historic Preservation and Interior Space Use for City Hall, Tampa, Florida" provided by Rowe Holmes Associates Architects, Inc., 100 Madison Street, Tampa, Florida; Principal-In-Charge - H. Dean Rowe, A.I.A., Project Manager - S. Keith Bailey, A.I.A.

The following drawings are on microfilm in the Department of Public Works, Tampa, Florida:

- (2) November 1977; Fire Suppression System Addition at First Floor Computer Room, Department of Public Works.
- (3) August, 1977; Remodeled Restrooms at the Second Floor, Department of Public Works.
- (4) August 1976; Carpet Layout at First Floor Lobby, Department of Public Works.
- (5) October, 1975; Floor Plans Redrawn, Department of Public Works.
- (6) February, 1975; Modifications to Budget Division and Comptrollers Office at Second Floor, Department of Public Works.
- (7) February 1975; As is Drawings of Fourth, Sixth and Seventh Floor, Department of Public Works.
- (8) December, 1973; Third Floor Council Chamber Renovations, Paul T. Ward, Inc.
- (9) February, 1968; Lobby Plan and First Floor Layout with Furnishings, Paul T. Ward, Inc.

PART III - SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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A. Architectural Drawings: (Continued)

- (10) October, 1962; Plans to Add Fire Escape Supports at South Entrance, Department of Public Works.
- (11) August, 1959; Electrical Power Changeover at Old Tampa City Hall and Police Station, Department of Public Works.
- (12) December, 1941; New Driveway at City Hall, Department of Public Works.

B. Bibliography:

Etching - Old Tampa City Hall (Special Collections, Tampa Library)

Grisimer, Karl. Tampa, A History of the City of Tampa Bay Region of Florida, edited by D. B. McKay. St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg Printing Co., 1950, Pgs. 177, 198, 237, 265.

Mascotte - City of Tampa, Volumn 1, No. 2, 1976, Picture Old City Hall (1890)

Original Rendering - Semi-Tropic Florida Development Yearbook, 1915.

Photo/This week in Tampa - June/ 1922 (Special Collections, Tampa Library)

Powell, Evanell Klintworth. Tampa That Was . . . History and Chronology through 1946. Boynton Beach: Star Publishing Company, Inc., 1973., p.

Robinson, Ernest L. History of Hillsborough County, Florida. St. Augustine: The Record Company Printers, 1928, p. 237.

St. Petersburg Times - June 1, 1980
July 8, 1962
June 3, 1961

Tampa Times - November 15, 1961

Tampa Times - November 25, 1978 - "City Hall Labeled 'Firetrap'"

Tampa Times - January 4, 1962
June 27, 1962
June 29, 1962

Tampa Tribune, June, 1914

Tampa Tribune, August 19, 1967

Tampa Tribune, July 8, 1962

Tampa Tribune - June 28, 1972 (Construction Photo B.C. Bonfoey)

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Tampa Tribune - June 28, 1972 (Construction Photo B.C. Bonfoey)

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Tampa Tribune - August 19, 1967